

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace paragraph [0001] with the following rewritten paragraph:

-- The present invention generally relates to semiconductor processing, and more particularly to a method of fabricating isolation regions, such as shallow trench isolation (STI), in which the stress of the isolation region has [[by]]been modulated by a nitrogen plasma treatment. The isolation regions created in the present invention, which are particularly useful in small width devices (on the order of about 0.25  $\mu\text{m}$  or less), have substantially little or no bird beaks in the isolation region.--